

Burris: What I'm most interested in is a set of more amorphous issues which are those things having to do with why you as an individual and USCO as a group of individuals became involved in technological media.

Gerd: Well, that was simple. That's not an amorphous issue at all. I started out as a poet and I got tired of writing poetry and lines. It seemed kind of silly, especially since people didn't read them very much. So I started pasting the words together in collage form and then I started putting them on slides. Before the Carousel it was a real hassle: you would have four slide projectors and four people and you could only have a four word line. To get an eight word line took an incredible amount of coordination. It looked like a Keystone Kops ... I mean people got off more on the eight people shoving slides through the projector than they did on what was on the screen. When the Carousel came along, all you needed was eight remote buttons in front of you. As soon as you saw that you could see that there must be more elegant ways than taping eight remote buttons to a piece of wood. The first thing we used was a stepping switch. Telephone Company technology. So, the technology came from the need to do certain things like putting a line of poetry up on an audio-visual form. I was also using tape to play collage words and I needed something to switch channels. With this technology it didn't matter whether you were switching on and off sound or slides. And of course, my personal original needs got a lot of input from people who ... I mean I wasn't a visual artist and when Steve Durkee (sp) , a painter, came along and started working with us it changed the whole constellation of what we were doing. When Michael Callahan started building them, programming equipment for us, it gave us a whole other area. The more equipment we got, the more possibilities we saw. And we very soon got into overload, which then . . . That was a little shocking because you overload with technology very fast, and we didn't like what it did to the audience. It took us a few performances to realize that here we were and people were getting god damn uncomfortable. So then, in a sense the only out was a kind of a unifying experience, kind of like pushing it all together instead of multiplicity. And the problem is that the easiest way into that mode is spiritual experience, and given the history of a lot of people that tends to get religious in nature. And I think the (inaudible) very close relationship of religion and art, religion tends to muddle the art. That was a big problem.

And then the parallels of chemical and electronic and mechanical device experiences was also a major problem. Because the chemical experiences were so much easier to produce and so much harder to control. (386 SONY)

Stern: And I think that people who feel that public funding is expand and get more arts oriented are in for a rude shock in the next decade.

Jon: Where do you see it going?

Gerd: I see it drying up and I see it being heavily politicized and heavily professionalized.

Jon: inaudible, but something like "toward specifically broadcast uses of video?"

Gerd: I don't know about video. Video is kind of beside the point. I think you have to look at it as a whole. Early on, the people who worked in arts administration at the Council and at the NEA were basically idealists who for one reason or another were hot in pursuit of getting money for either

artists working or production on some level or other. They wanted to see the work be done and get out there. Now, with the extent of the funding that has become available, we've grown a bureaucracy and a lot of that bureaucracy is educated in the same techniques as any bureaucracy. And basically, they're more interested in being careful and maintaining control of what's happening, you know, giving a lash of the whip and letting it fly because the whole idea . . . the difference between initiating the possibility of an art form, as was done, I think, in video, and deciding what a program should be and how museum curators should go about putting a show together and how an artist should present his work as the line. When arts administrators and public funding people tell artists and museum people what they have to do in order to be eligible for funding, we're in a lot of trouble. When they're responsible to what's going on in the field, there's some hope and I think that's no longer the case. I think there are very few people in state arts councils and the national picture who are responsive to what's happening. They are all trying to initiate what they think should be done, they all know what they want to fund and they're looking for it. And of course what happens is that you're generating a lot of artists and a lot of people in the art world who are perfectly willing to write any kind of proposal that needs to be written to be funded.